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COUNTRY Czechoslovakia

SUBJECT Public Reaction to the New Rationing System

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FOOD SITUATION IN THE CSR.

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The new organization of the rationing system in the CSR brought forth great dissatisfaction among the population * The Communists themselves feel bitter about it. So, for example, Ondrej NOVY, district-road keeper in MENCLOV (METZLING) (N 50/P 71), a diehard Communist and member of the Militia, said publicly at a district meeting of the KSC, that after what the Government had done with the rationing system, he will shoot his children and escape abroad. After the meeting, NOVY was immediately deprived of his function in the Militia and the firearms, allocated to him, have been taken away.

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Comment: The new organization of the rationing system in the CSR became valid on 1 January 1952, but as early as December 1951, through the mediary of speeches by Governmental and other functionaries, articles in the Press and a publication of the appropriate regulations, the population had been informed of the causes of this reorganization and of the changes which would result from it in the rationing of the various classes of the population. In December 1951, Frantisek KRAJCIR, Minister of Internal Trade, who is responsible for the supply situation, said: "By this new organization of the rationing system, Czechoslovakia had done away with various wrongs which were contrary to the present social set-up and with the requirements of the up-building." The new changes do not consist in a general lowering of the rations but in a stricter differentiation between the various types of consumers and in the restriction of the number of persons who are entitled to additional rations which are to supply the additional calories to those engaged in heavy work. These measures have affected great numbers of people and all the farmers, pensioners and still existing independent businessmen.

The farming population have been affected one and all, that is both the independent farmers (from 0.5 hectares of arable land upwards) and members of the United Agricultural Cooperatives (JZD). From now on, the farmers have to depend for their food supplies on the produce of their own farms or cooperative farms and on the free market. Those, who fulfil their obligations as far as deliveries are concerned, receive only a ration of sugar and soap and an incomplete (by 20 points, i.e. by one sixth, reduced) clothing card. From others, also this ration is withheld. Pensioners and other "unproductive elements" - as compared to the category of persons in employment - receive after the reorganization 200 grams of meat less during a four weeks' rationing period.

The remnants of the so-called "exploitation class" are specially hard hit by the new regulations. These people will from now on receive nothing from the regulated market and must rely on the extremely expensive and irregularly supplied free market or on the black market. This concerns mainly the "village rich", i.e. independent farmers who own more than 15 hectares of arable land, or even less if they are considered the "village rich" on account of their inimical attitude towards the regime, and further all independent businessmen

who have in their employ at least one other person. The rations are being withheld also from their families with the exception of children under 18 years of age.

The new regulations render invalid about 3000 previous regulations concerning the controlled economy which are now substituted by one single regulation, and about 94 types of ration cards, in lieu of which mere 24 types have been introduced.

Consumers are divided into three large categories which are in turn subdivided into groups. In the first category are children (from two to six years of age), in the second adolescents (from 6 to 12 and from 12 to 18 years of age) and in the third grown ups over 18 years of age and these fall into three groups. Those employed receive the highest rations, pensioners and rentiers receive less, and the smallest, so-called basic ration, is received by the others, unless they are self-suppliers (farmers) or unless they have been altogether exempted from the rationing (independent businessmen or the "village rich"). The basic ration is for example received by all married unemployed women unless they are caring for at least one child under the age of 15, and rentiers living on their own capital reserves.

Additional rations which formerly have been allocated rather benevolently to a large number of consumers - the well known "P-2", "P-3" and "T-4" ration cards - are today dealt with more economically, from the point of view of national economy. New additional ration books are being introduced, i. e. "T" for those doing heavy work, "TK" for those doing heavy work in key industries, "HP" for miners working above ground, "HL" for miners working underground and finally "MD" for those who are fulfilling the mining norms. These additional rations are allocated only on the condition of regular attendance at work and after two instances of unjustified absence are withdrawn. Apart from that there are special additional rations for workers in danger of infection and for mothers after the confinement.

In the CSR press no mention is found of the caloric value of the rations. As an illustration, the following is a list of rationed goods for the month of February 1952 (according to the CSR Official Bulletin of 26 January 1952), as drawn on the basic ration, on a ration for employed people, on additional ration "T" and additional ration "HL".

	basic ration	ration for the employed	additional ration "T"	additional ration "HL"
bread	5.000 g	5.250 g	1.500 g	2.600 g
flour & pastry	3.500 g	5.900 g	750 g	3.000 g
meat & meat products	1.150 g	1.350 g	350 g	2.900 g
rice	150 g	150 g	150 g	200 g
butter	200 g	250 g		
animal fat (raw)	160 g	200 g	50 g	1.600 g
artificial fats	340 g	420 g	150 g	430 g

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sugar	1.000 g	1.500 g	---	200 g
milk	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ litres	3 $\frac{1}{2}$ litres	---	14 $\frac{1}{2}$ litres
eggs	3	4	---	---
potatoes	6.000 g	6.000 g	---	---

Another innovation is that the distribution of ration books is no longer in the hands of the local administrative bodies. The Press openly admits that especially the National Committees tolerated and supported favoritism and of their own accord made exceptions to the rule or introduced changes which harmed the national economy. For that reason, beginning 1 January 1952, the National Committees are deprived of their right to distribute the ration books and, under the supervision of the respective ministries, their competence is transferred to the enterprises themselves, which are in a position to judge whether anybody really deserves additional rations. Further, also the managers of the various enterprises are entitled to additional rations, which means non-manual workers who are responsible for the management of production.

A strict control over the claims of individual consumers to additional rations undoubtedly results in considerable saving of supplies, on the other hand, however, it results in great dissatisfaction among the workers, some of whom cannot defend themselves, but others, especially the Communists, are protesting vigorously. As compared to the former favorizing and benevolent attitude towards the Party members, the Communists are thus losing another privilege by the reorganization of rationing, a privilege which used to make them feel that they were holding a unique position in the State.